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ABSTRACT

Information on how to evaluate college and university presidents is presented focusing on: (1) purposes of presidential evaluation; (2) guidelines for evaluation (objectivity, criteria, topics and standards, scheduling, constituency consultation, self-assessment by the president, and reporting and use of the evaluation); and (3) post-evaluation processes (review and adjustment of the presidential position description, review of the evaluation process and its results, and review of governing board performance in relation to the presidency). Eight steps involved in evaluation include: evaluations should be conducted in the context of, and subsequent to, a general institutional analysis; anonymous letters should never be accepted by evaluators; and persons engaged in conduct evaluations should be experienced, knowledgeable, and preferably not connected with the institution. A policy statement developed by the Committee on Governance of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and approved by the association membership is concerned with ethics. It sets forth the following standards: place loyalty to the institution above self-interest; ensure that the institution's business and public affairs are conducted in an ethically responsible manner; and seek to provide an environment for implementation of programs that will foster both the social and character development of students. (SM)

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EVALUATING COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS [AND]

ETHICAL PRACTICES FOR COLLEGE PRESIDENTS.

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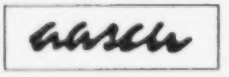
Evaluating College and University Presidents



American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Association of University Administrators

Preface

The role of any college or university president is usually complex, diverse, and demanding. Accordingly, the task of evaluating the performance of such persons accurately, fairly, and objectively is unusually difficult. Evaluations, whether formal or informal, public or private, should be conducted when their purposes and potential use are clearly understood and prescribed, in advance, by the governing board. Moreover, evaluations should derive their focus from previously outlined mandates and statements of expectations by the governing board, and should relate clearly to both the characteristics of the institutions being served, and the changing internal and external factors that affect it. Such expectations should be presented to the president before the time of initial appointment or at the time of reappointment.

Because the presidency is integral to the institution, and vice versa, presidential evaluations should be conducted in the context of, and subsequent to, a general institutional analysis, such as those manifested by the standard fifth- and tenth-year accreditation reports. Thence, the style and method used in the presidential evaluation should set a positive example suitable for guiding all campus administrative evaluations.

Purposes of Presidential Evaluation

Ideally, the prime purpose of presidential evaluation (and all administrative evaluations) should be to foster improved institutional as well as individual performance. Beyond ascertaining the quality and substance of presidential performance in this context, secondary purposes should include familiarization of the governing board with complex functions, obligations, restrictions, and sociopolitical realities that occupy today's campus presidents. Such purposes should be seen as inseparable from the effectiveness of the trust, responsibilities, and performance of the governing board itself. Thus the presidential evaluation acquires additional significance as a broad opportunity to observe and thence improve overall institutional performance (including imminent as well as extant progress) during the time of any given president's stewardship.

Guidelines for Evaluation

Objectivity

The evaluation should be administered objectively and fairly, according to a process that is mutually satisfactory to both the president and the governing board.

Criteria, Topics and Standards

The scope of an evaluation should be clearly related to a previously established position description of the presidency, and should be pursued in light of the institution's mission, goals, characteristics, traditions, and any mutually acknowledged objectives and/or priorities. Relevant changes in off-campus factors (including "sunshine" laws) affecting the university during the president's tenure, should be factored into the analysis.

While effectiveness of "leadership" and "management" are commonly prominent among topics of presidential assessment, with a high degree of both being sought from any president, care should be taken to understand the differences, as well as the relationships, between

them. Enlightened inaction, as well as action, should also be recognized within the spectrum of presidential accomplishments.

If the conduct of an evaluation embodies use of specific "criteria" such as "problem-solving", "decision-making" etc., they should appear only as topical components of broad subjective reviews of presidential performance. Moreover, attention should be paid to attained levels of performance in the various areas of evaluation rather than mere documentation of activity in each category.

Scheduling

Evaluation procedures should be prescribed and scheduled well in advance of the actual evaluation event, avoiding any possible misinterpretations regarding cause or purpose. Evaluations should be scheduled on timetables separate from contract renewals.

The evaluation should focus on the president's performance over a specific period of time. The aforementioned fifth- and tenth-year accreditation visits are conveniently available time-spanning reference studies. Presidential evaluations could naturally follow them by one year.

Constituency Consultation

Consultation with members of the campus and kindred off-campus community should be conducted in private by objective, nonpartisan individuals from off campus. (Some boards do not use this practice to avoid both the popularity contest and the compromising of the president who in some instances might be held hostage by these constituencies.) If such consultations are to be used, active or retired college or university presidents are often suited by their experience to provide such service. No anonymous letters about a president should be accepted. Signed, written commentary is preferable to oral commentary. Questionnaires, whether circulated or uncirculated, should be avoided as consultative devices or records. All received commentary should be carefully weighed in light of its personal sources, context, and environment of origin. For example, the frequency of contact any respondent has had with the president, and the years of contact with the president, should be considered.

Consultants or agents engaged in securing constituent opinion should concentrate on reporting, and should not express judgments or recommendations of any kind regarding report findings.

Self-Assessment by the President

Presidents should be allowed an opportunity to participate in the process by means of a written self-evaluation and institutional overview. Such an account of presidential experience should be reviewed in relation to circumstances and events as perceived by more disengaged, perhaps even biased or uninformed, constituents or observers.

Reporting and Use of the Evaluation

The evaluating board should share with the president the results of the evaluation, and should provide ample opportunity for mutual discussion of it and its implications and/or consequences. Beyond this, the results of the evaluation should be held in the strictest of confidence and privacy. The evaluation records are the property of the governing board and the president; in a *system*, they belong to the chief executive officer of the system.

Results of board decisions regarding emolument, improvement, continuation, endorsement, termination, etc., if derived from or related to any evaluation, should be conveyed to the president in an equally private fashion. Any appropriate or necessary formal statements evolving from this context should be separated in time

from any relevant decisions by several weeks, and should be made in a summary form that contains no detailed comments of positive or negative nature.

Post-Evaluation Processes

Review and Adjustment of the Presidential Position Description

As a result of findings and observations made during a presidential evaluation, it may become clear that, because of changed circumstances, the position description and related board expectations for the president may need revising or updating. Thus, the evaluation process provides information both useful and essential to timely adjustment of presidential mandates and board expectations concerning the performance of both the president and the institution at large.

Among questions that a board might consequently ask of itself in this connection are: Have the rights and integrity of the president been upheld? Should the board give the president more material, human, and moral support to foster presidential success in meeting board expectations? Should the personal side of the presidency be given more consideration and support? Is the nature of the presidency itself, as shaped and supported by the board, in need of change? Is the board, or has it been, responsible for any deficiencies as well as the successes of presidential performance?

Review of the Evaluation Process and its Results

Upon completion of any presidential evaluation, a governing board should ask itself whether its original intentions for the evaluation have been fulfilled, whether the standards and principles of the university or college have been upheld, and whether the institution's academic mission has been faithfully pursued in the process. This is also the time for a decision to be made about the scheduling and form of the next presidential evaluation, with specific care being taken to enunciate any prospective changes in the evaluation process.

Review of Governing Board Performance in Relation to the Presidency

In the end, the board should ask itself, "What did the evaluation process reveal about the board and its own performance?" and "What did the process reveal about the faculty, staff, students, and alumni and...indeed...the entire university?"

These guidelines were prepared, reviewed, and approved by: AASCU/AAUA Joint Task Force on Administrative Evaluations, AASCU Board of Directors, and AAUA Board of Directors. The document was finalized by President Alistair W. McCrone, Humboldt State University (CA), Chancellor Edward M. Penson, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and Allan Watson, Vice President, AASCU.

American Association of State
Colleges and Universities
One Dupont Circle/Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036-1192

American Association
of University Administrators
P.O. Box 6221
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487

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Evaluation of College and University Presidents

1. Presidential evaluations, whether formal or informal, should be conducted only after their purposes and potential use are clearly prescribed, in advance, by the governing board.

2. Evaluations should be conducted in the context of, and subsequent to, a general institutional analysis.

3. The scope of any evaluation should be clearly related to a previously established mandate and position description for the presidency, which reflects the institution's mission, goals, characteristics, condition, etc.

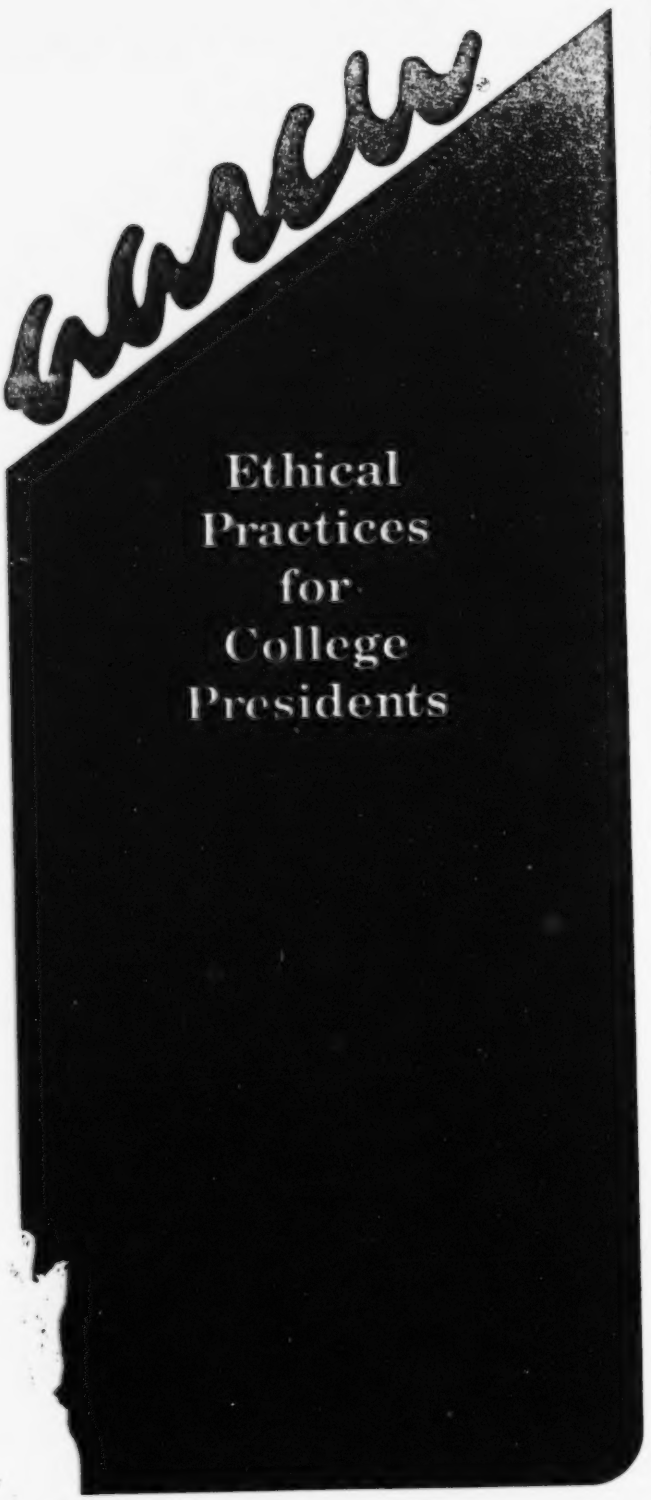
4. Anonymous letters should never be accepted by evaluators.

5. Persons engaged to conduct evaluations should be experienced, knowledgeable, and preferably not connected with the involved institution.

6. Presidents should be allowed to participate in the process via a written self-evaluation, and to have prior review of any assessment instruments, should any be used.

7. If conduct of the evaluation embodies the use of specific criteria, they should only appear as parts of a broad subjective review of presidential performance.

8. The evaluating board should share with the president, in the strictest of privacy, the result of any evaluation, and should allow mutual discussion of it and its implications.


Ethical
Practices
for
College
Presidents

The following policy statement was developed by the Committee on Governance of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and approved by the association membership at the 28th annual meeting on November 22, 1988.

Presidents of member institutions of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities recognize the special responsibilities that pertain to them by virtue of the public trust they hold. To fulfill that trust, presidents should adhere to the following standards in exercising their responsibilities:

- Create, foster, and maintain on campus an atmosphere of academic freedom conducive to the pur-suit of knowledge and the open exchange of ideas.
- Conduct all personal and public affairs mindful that the primary objective of the president is to serve the best interests of the institution.
- Place loyalty to the institution above self-interest and above loyalty to special interests or particular constituent bodies.
- Formulate institutional decisions and personnel actions according to the best objective information and in compliance with the highest professional standards.
- Provide for the establishment of institutional standards, policies and practices that promote the highest possible level of institutional effectiveness, academic quality, student character development, and ethical practices.
- Ensure that institutional policies and practices uphold the dignity of each member of the campus community and do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, national origin, physical disabilities, or personal beliefs and preferences.
- Ensure that procedures are established to thoroughly review, in accordance with accepted standards of equity and due process, any allegations of unethical behavior or incompetence against any member of the campus community.
- Exercise appropriate probity and caution in using financial resources that may be available through campus foundations or other organizations.
- Ensure that the institution's business and public affairs are conducted in an ethically responsible manner.
- Encourage on campus a recognition that we live in a world community, and inspire within students and faculty an appreciation of cultural pluralism and intellectual diversity.
- Seek to provide an environment for implementation of programs that will foster both the social and character development of students.
- Use the special privileges and advantages accruing to the office of the president for the enhancement of the institution.
- Faithfully and accurately report the institution's financial condition, status of physical facilities, quality and character of programs, and role and capacities to the public at large.
- Create an atmosphere of collegiality and fairness in relationships with other institutions to ensure healthy competition, rather than destructive rivalry.
- Encourage a clear definition of the governance roles and responsibilities of local, system, and statewide governing boards and an atmosphere of open communication with the governor and state legislature, ensuring that all such bodies have a full understanding of institutional mission and programs in order to discharge their governanc responsibilities effectively.